

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 51

By Clemmons

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Betty Chiles Nixon of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Betty Chiles Nixon of Nashville; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Nixon was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for her fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, Betty Nixon was born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1936 to Mignon and John Chiles and moved to Nashville in 1942, when her family opened the popular Cross Keys Restaurant; and

WHEREAS, after attending Hillsboro High School, Ms. Nixon graduated from Harpeth Hall School; she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Southern Methodist University in 1958 and a Master of Business Administration from Vanderbilt University's Owen Graduate School of Management; and

WHEREAS, Betty Nixon's fervent belief that people should be treated equally, that everyone's voice matters, combined with an innate ability to bring people together, led Ms. Nixon to a life of public service; she was a civil rights and women's rights activist, teacher, politician, lobbyist, press secretary, businesswoman, volunteer, wife, and mother, and always, she was an agent of change; and

WHEREAS, a strong proponent of urban-integrated environments, Betty Nixon won her first race for the Metropolitan Council of Nashville and Davidson County in 1975, thereby becoming the first woman elected to represent the 18<sup>th</sup> Council District, which includes neighborhoods near Vanderbilt and Belmont universities; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Nixon went on to serve three terms (1975-1987) as a member of the Metropolitan Council, and she was the first woman to serve as chair of the council's Budget and Finance Committee; and

WHEREAS, Betty Nixon was a staunch and tireless advocate for the protection of Nashville's older residential neighborhoods and historic architecture, including the preservation of the historic Customs House on Broadway; and

WHEREAS, her leadership as an active neighbor and as an effective and progressive elected official inspired countless Nashvillians to invest in and foster strong urban neighborhoods. Ms. Nixon's central role in the revitalization of urban residential neighborhoods was recognized decades ago by the Hillsboro-West End Neighborhood Association when it created the coveted Betty Nixon Good Neighbor Award, which annually honors the efforts of a neighbor who has given "selflessly to the neighborhood to protect or increase the quality of life..."; and

WHEREAS, a trailblazer in Nashville politics, Ms. Nixon was the first woman to manage a statewide political campaign in Tennessee, leading Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale's 1984 campaign as well as the 1988 campaign of U.S. Senator Jim Sasser; in 1987, she became the second woman to run as a major party candidate for mayor of Nashville, an office for which she ran again in 1991; and

WHEREAS, after briefly working in Washington, D.C., for the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations, Betty Nixon served with distinction in community and government relations for Vanderbilt University from 1990 to 2007, beginning as a special assistant in the Office of University Relations and General Counsel; in 2000, she was named assistant vice chancellor for the Office of Community, Neighborhood and Government Relations; and

WHEREAS, Vanderbilt University Chancellor Nicholas S. Zeppos remembers Betty Nixon as "an exemplary leader at Vanderbilt and in the greater Nashville community. Through her civic leadership and tireless efforts to advance education, civil rights, and to open doors of

opportunity for women, she made our city a more progressive, more just, and an infinitely better place to live and work."; and

WHEREAS, ever active in the civic affairs of her city, Ms. Nixon was appointed by Mayor Phil Bredesen to the Nashville Electric Service board, which she served as chair from 1992 to 1994, and she also chaired the Davidson County Election Commission during Mayor Bill Purcell's administration; and

WHEREAS, she also served with probity as chair of the Tennessee Steering Committee to Improve Mathematics and Science Education and represented Tennessee on the management team of a National Science Foundation grant to improve mathematics and science education in the Appalachian region; and

WHEREAS, her myriad contributions to her community also include her service on the boards of the Bill Wilkerson Center, Tennessee Municipal League, Tennessee Women's Political Caucus, Rochelle Center, Oasis Center, League for the Hard of Hearing, Alcohol and Drug Council of Middle Tennessee, Project PENCIL, and United Way of Middle Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, a grateful community expressed its appreciation to Ms. Nixon by awarding her several high honors, including the Athena Award, the YMCA Woman of Achievement Award, and the Presidential Award from the Tennessee Community Education Association, as well as achievement awards from the Tennessee Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the National Organization for Women, and the Women's Political Caucus, among others; and

WHEREAS, Betty Nixon was previously married to U.S. District Judge John Nixon; in 1994, she married Henry Clark, who preceded her in death; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Nixon is survived by her children: Mignon Elizabeth Nixon, Anne Trice Nixon, Thomas Henry Clark II, Rebecca Clark-Fuller, and Susan Lynn Clark; and her brother, John Garland Chiles; and

WHEREAS, Betty Nixon leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Betty Chiles Nixon, reflecting fondly upon her impeccable character, her extraordinary contributions to the people of Tennessee, and her stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to Ms. Nixon's family and many friends.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.